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LETTER DATED 1 APRIL 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ARMENIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

It is with deep concern that I am compelled to inform you of the military developments that have taken place along the border between Nagorny Karabakh and the Azerbaijani region of Kelbajar. A letter circulated by Mr. Hassan Hassanov, Azerbaijan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, presents a version of these events which unfortunately accuses Armenia of carrying out acts of aggression against Azerbaijan. Such accusations by the Government of Azerbaijan come as a real surprise to the Armenian Government.

The facts of these events which began on 23 March are as follows. Azerbaijani regular armed forces launched a massive military offensive aimed at two geographic locations - the region of Mardakert in Nagorny Karabakh and the humanitarian corridor in Lachin, on the southern border of Nagorny Karabakh.

The main goal of this offensive was to take control of the Lachin humanitarian corridor, the only route via which humanitarian and medical supplies can be transported to the civilian population in Nagorny Karabakh. Karabakh Self-Defence Forces were compelled to take decisive countermeasures in response to this offensive to defend their vital interests.

No military forces from the Republic of Armenia took part in any of these actions, but Armenian forces remain on full alert in their positions along the Armenian-Azerbaijan border.

The Azerbaijani military offensive is particularly alarming as it came a few days after the conclusion of the latest round of peace talks held at Geneva under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), where Azerbaijan's delegation took a non-constructive position on the establishment of a cease-fire in the region. The small positive progress that had been achieved earlier in Rome was effectively stalled by the Azerbaijani delegation's action in Geneva.

This political démarche that paralleled the failed attempt of the Azerbaijani military offensive to take control over the Lachin corridor and the western part of the Mardakert region leads us to conclude that the authorities in Baku still intend to solve the Karabakh issue through the use of force.

I attach to my letter a statement by the President of Nagorny Karabakh's Defence Committee, Mr. Robert Kocharian, which gives a detailed report on the military developments in and around Nagorny Karabakh.

I should once again like to reaffirm my Government's commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict and its full support of the CSCE negotiation process, in which I believe Armenia has played a constructive role.

I should be grateful if you would circulate my letter as well as the attached statement by Mr. Kocharian as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alexander ARZOUMANIAN
Permanent Representative

Annex

Republic of Nagorny Karabakh - State Committee of Defence

Statement dated 31 March 1993, by the President of the State Committee of Defence of the Republic of Nagorny Karabakh

On 27 March 1993, the State Committee of Defence of the Republic of Nagorny Karabakh ordered the Republic's armed forces to undertake all necessary measures to ensure the defence of the people and borders of Nagorny Karabakh from the renewed attacks of the Azerbaijani army.

Beginning on 20 March, Azerbaijan had intensified the war against Nagorny Karabakh, in pursuance of its policy of seeking a military solution to the problem. Azerbaijan had initiated operations on both sides of the Martakert region as well as of the humanitarian corridor of Lachin, contrary to the spirit of the CSCE document agreed upon in Rome on 1 March.

The army of Nagorny Karabakh, acting in legitimate self-defence, has repelled the aggressors from its borders and must ensure that the Azerbaijani army may not cause further devastation on the western borders of our Republic.

The State Committee of Defence has been informed by its field commanders that the Azerbaijani army has retreated from the area following an initial attempt to resist and that the area was largely uninhabited by civilians. The Nagorny Karabakh army is under strict orders to protect the lives of any civilians still in the area and to provide safe passage for those who wish to leave.

Field commanders have also reported that much of the household goods looted from Martakert villages by Azerbaijanis during their occupation of northern Nagorny Karabakh last year has been discovered in this area.

The Republic of Nagorny Karabakh regrets this new escalation in the fighting and places full responsibility on Azerbaijan, which has rejected the path of a negotiated solution and which has managed to lead to an impasse every effort for a cease-fire currently within the framework of CSCE.

The authorities of Nagorny Karabakh place the security of the people above all other considerations and welcome any steps that may bring about an immediate and unconditional cease-fire which does not endanger the safety and lives of the people of the Republic.

(Signed) Robert KOTCHARIAN
President
State Committee of Defence
Republic of Nagorny Karabakh